

NEURODIVERSITY AND CTE

By Tara MP Havlicek

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 2.4 MILLION POSITIONS IN MANUFACTURING MAY GO UNFILLED BY 2028

according to a 2018 report from Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute. In order to close this gap, we must ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn about career pathways. One important session at ACTE's CareerTech VISION 2023 — *Neurodiversity and CTE: Meet Your Future Workforce* — will feature a panel discussion on how to include autistic students in your career and technical education (CTE) programs.

The Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation (MEAF) has been focused on disability inclusion since 1991 with a mission to help young people with disabilities maximize their potential and participation in society with a focus on empowerment through increased employment. MEAF works toward this mission by investing its

grant dollars in youth preparation and employer education.

The foundation connects the talent of neurodivergent youth with opportunities that lead to successful careers in fields like manufacturing and technology.

Meet the panel.

Aspiritech is a Chicagoland nonprofit that was founded in 2008 with a mission to empower neurodivergent individuals to fulfill their potential through meaningful employment combined with social opportunity. Aspiritech provides training and employment in quality assurance (QA) and software testing pathways. In these fields, some common traits of autism —

like focus and attention to detail — can be a competitive advantage.

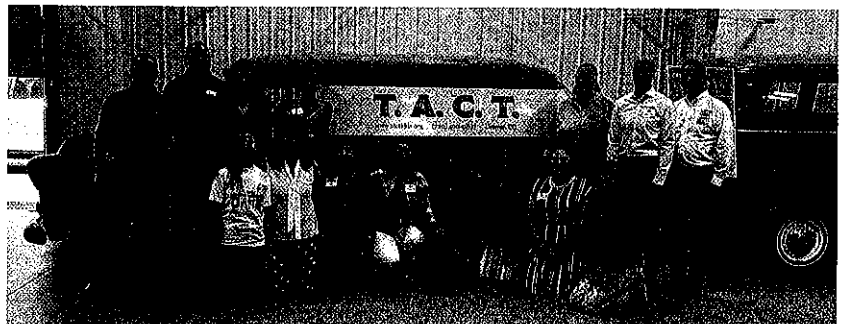
Blue Star Recyclers is an award-winning social enterprise based in Colorado. Since 2009, they have created permanent and competitive jobs, directly and indirectly, for more than 100 adults with disabilities. And they've recycled more than 30 million pounds of electronics. Their employment model has been replicated across the country and abroad. And now, these collaborative efforts have led to new job opportunities in the plastics industry, beginning in Indiana.

Teaching the Autism Community Trades (TACT) was founded in 2016 by parents who wanted to create more opportunities for their son and other children like him. The mission of TACT is to encourage and empower a full spectrum of individuals through education and employment in the skilled trades; career pathways include auto mechanics, carpentry, electrical, welding and technology. Not only are they focused on building marketable, technical skills, but students also benefit from instruction and practice in fine and gross motor skills, executive functioning, problem solving and socialization skills.

The Uniquely Abled Project (UAP) began its efforts in 2013 and has since launched the Uniquely Abled Academy. This represents a first-of-its-kind collaboration between machine technology educators, specialists in education for autistic students, and representatives from state and local social service agencies as well as nonprofit and for-profit organizations. The UAP is dedicated to training, placing and supporting employees and their employers in the manufacturing industry. In just a few months, autistic young adults can learn to become entry-level CNC machinists. What started at College of the Canyons in California has been replicated in nine other locations and counting.

Meet the moderator.

With over 15 years of experience in corporate philanthropy, Tara MP Havlicek serves as program manager for the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, where she



focuses on national grantmaking, and corporate employee volunteer programs. Tara also contributes to the field of grantmaking as co-chair of the Midwest Region with PEAK Grantmaking where she facilitates conversations and presents at regional meetings and annual conferences focused on process improvement, diversity and inclusion. She serves as an advisor with the National Disability Mentoring Coalition and a mentor with the psychology department at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Prior to her role at the Foundation, she worked in human resources and administration with Mitsubishi Electric Automation, where she was responsi-

ble for employee relations and organizing corporate social and philanthropic events.

Tara graduated with a bachelor's in psychology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She lives with her husband and two adopted cats, Sylvester and Oslo, in Lake County, Illinois, and vol-

unteers her time with various nonprofit organizations that focus on children, animals and cancer research. ■

REFERENCE

Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute. (2018). *The jobs are here, but where are the people?*

Attend this session at VISION to better understand how neurodivergent youth can succeed in CTE.

ACTE STATE LEADERSHIP

STATE Leadership TRAINING PROGRAM

This program supports state and regional association leaders, as well as up-and-coming leaders, through specialized training in association management and leadership development. The next session will occur as a preconference event.

ACTE's CareerTech VISION 2023
November 29, 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Phoenix, Arizona

More information is available at acteonline.org/leadership_training